

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Essex University
Programme name	Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Clinical psychologist
Date of visit	24 – 25 May 2011

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Executive summary

The Health Professions Council (HPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HPC is a health regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HPC currently regulates 15 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Practitioner psychologist' or 'Clinical psychologist' must be registered with us. The HPC keep a register of health professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

The visitors' report which follows outlines the recommended outcome made by the visitors on the ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 25 August 2011. At the Committee meeting on 25 August 2011, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider as the practitioner psychologist profession came onto the register in July 2009 and a decision was made by the Education and Training Committee to visit all existing programmes from this profession. This visit assessed the programme against the standards of education and training (SETs) and considered whether those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

This visit was part of a joint event. The education provider re-validated the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The education provider, the professional body and the HPC formed a joint panel, with an independent chair and secretary, supplied by the education provider. Whilst the joint panel participated in collaborative scrutiny of the programme and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the education provider and the professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Annie Mitchell (Clinical psychologist) David Packwood (Counselling psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Benjamin Potter
Proposed student numbers	10
First approved intake	1 January 2005
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2011
Chair	Pam Cox (Essex University)
Secretary	Kirstie Sceats (Essex University)
Members of the joint panel	Martin Colley (Internal panel member) Tim Rakow (Internal panel member) Murray Warren (Internal panel member) Anna Orchard (Internal panel member) Eve Knight (British Psychological Society) Andrew Cuthbertson (British Psychological Society) Andrew Vidgen (British Psychological Society) Aimee Hayter (British Psychological Society) Molly Ross (British Psychological Society)

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HPC reviewed the documentation detailed below, sent by the education provider:

	Yes	No	N/A
Programme specification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Descriptions of the modules	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice placement handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External examiners' reports from the last two years	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

During the visit the HPC saw the following groups or facilities:

	Yes	No	N/A
Senior managers of the education provider with responsibility for resources for the programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placements providers and educators/mentors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for ongoing approval, the visitors must be assured that the programme meets all of the standards of education and training (SETs) and that those who complete the programme meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a number of conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 53 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 4 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for ongoing approval. Conditions are set when certain standards of education and training have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.

The visitors have also made a number of recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for ongoing approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

The visitors did not make any commendations on the programme. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

2.1 The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must clearly state in the information provided to applicants what the requirements for successful application to the programme are.

Reason: Having scrutinised the programme documentation the visitors were satisfied the programme applied selection and entry criteria to ensure that successful applicants have a good command of reading, writing and spoken English. The visitors were also satisfied that the programme does not accredit prior experiential learning (APEL). However, the visitors could only identify a clear statement regarding the APEL policy in programme's rules of assessment, not in the information provided to applicants or in the advertising materials. It was also the case that the programme stated different English language proficiency requirement in the programme documentation and the school prospectus. As this requirement, and the policy regarding APEL was not clearly articulated to applicants, this could lead to an applicant successfully appealing a decision not allow them entry onto the programme. Therefore the visitors require the programme team to provide a clear statement regarding the APEL policy and to consistently state the proficiency of English an applicant would have to demonstrate in order to successfully apply to the programme. This will ensure that a potential applicant will have all of the information they require to make an informed choice about applying and taking up an offer of a place on this programme.

5.8 Practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Condition: The education provider must articulate how they ensure that practice placement educators understand what their role as supervisor on this programme entails.

Reason: From the documentation provided, and in discussion at the visit, the visitors were clear that practice placement educators were experienced clinicians and the majority were registered as clinical psychologists with the HPC. They also noted that the programme team recorded what training practice placement educators had undertaken and that educators were provided with comprehensive programme specific documentation. However, it was clear that additional training was not seen as mandatory for practice placement educators new to the programme. The visitors were therefore unclear as to how the programme team ensured that practice placement educators new to the programme were appropriately oriented to the requirements of this particular programme. This could lead to students perceiving that they may have been disadvantaged due to differences in placement experience. In turn students could utilise the academic appeals process to contest placement outcomes which could lead to students completing the course even if the programme team have concerns over their fitness to practice. Therefore the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate

how the programme team ensure that practice placement educators understand what trainees on the programme require from their placement experience and how to assess this experience. This is to ensure that there is as much equality of student experience and assessment as possible across all practice placements and that this standard continues to be met.

6.7 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

Condition: The education provider must clearly state in the programme documentation that where there are variations, the programme's rules of assessment supersede those of the university.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation that there were some inconsistencies between the programme specific rules of assessment and some of the university regulations. After discussion with the programme team it was clarified that for the level 8 modules, which cover the majority of the programme, the programme specific rules of assessment supersede the university regulations where there are variations between the two. While the visitors were satisfied that this was the case they were not clear as to how the programme documentation clearly articulated these arrangements to students. Therefore the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate how the students on the programme are made aware of the requirements for progression and achievement within the programme and which rules or regulations apply at which points. This will ensure that students understand what is required of them to successfully complete the programme and that this standard continues to be met.

6.11 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must include a clear statement in the programme documentation that at least one external examiner for the programme will be from the relevant part of the register unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail in the external examiner recruitment policy specific to the programme. The visitors were satisfied with the current external examiner arrangements for the programme but need to see evidence that HPC requirements regarding the external examiner on the programme have been included in the documentation to demonstrate that this standard continues to be met.

Recommendations

3.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider continued monitoring of the staffing levels for the programme to ensure there is an adequate number of staff available to deliver the programme.

Reason: From the documentation provided and in discussion at the visit the visitors were satisfied that there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver the programme. Therefore they were satisfied that the programme continues to meet this standard. However, from discussions with the senior team and the programme team the visitors were made aware of the pressures on staffing levels due to the current financial climate in which the education provider is operating. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider continues to monitor the staffing levels on the programme to ensure the continuity of administrative support to staff and practice placement providers. The education provider should also consider increasing the ability of the programme team to flexibly recruit temporary members of staff to cover periods of high activity. In this way the education provider can hopefully maintain the administrative support for the programme, which was widely praised, and provide the programme team with the flexibility to deal with periods of high activity or temporary reductions in staffing.

3.14 Where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider moving the point at which the programme team gains student consent for participation in practical and clinical teaching.

Reason: The visitors noted that the programme team gained students consent for participation in practical and clinical teaching at the interview stage of the application process. The visitors therefore felt that this standard was met. However, the visitors did highlight that while there was a process in place applicants may feel as though they had to give their consent as they had not yet secured a place on the programme, despite being informed that this was not the case. The visitors therefore strongly recommend that the programme team consider gaining students consent for participation in practical and clinical teaching after they have been accepted and have taken up a place on the programme. This could be instead of gaining students consent at interview or in addition to this process. In this way the programme team would avoid any unnecessary pressure which applicants may feel during the interview process to give their consent for participation in practical and clinical teaching.

5.4 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider including placement monitoring in the mid-placement reviews.

Reason: From the information provided prior to the visit and, in discussion with the programme team, the visitors were satisfied that the programme team maintains an effective system for approving and monitoring all placements. Therefore the visitors feel that the programme continues to meet this standard. However, in discussion with the students it was noted that the mid-placement visits, which take place for each placement, only concentrated on the achievement of the student. The visitors felt that this was an opportunity to address any issues in relation to the resources provided by the practice placement. Therefore the visitors recommend that the programme team includes elements of placement monitoring into the mid-placement visits. In this way the programme team can ensure that sufficient resources are available to students while on placement and thereby enhance the existing system for monitoring placements.

5.13 A range of learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of service users and colleagues must be in place throughout practice placements.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider continuing the work being undertaken to encompass the development of formal mechanisms for the inclusion of service users in key elements of the programme.

Reason: From discussions at the visit the visitors noted that a range of teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of service users were in place throughout the practice placements. Therefore the visitors were satisfied that this standard was met. However, the programme team highlighted that work was being done to integrate service users and carers into key elements of the programme and that this work was ongoing. The visitors recommend that the programme team continue this work and consider setting up formal mechanisms to include service users in the planning and operation of some elements of the programme. They also recommend that the programme team utilise the well-developed service user resources and provision in place at the university and the work being undertaken at their partner NHS trusts. In combination with utilising the national good practice on the involvement of service users in clinical psychology education, this will allow the programme to integrate service users and carers fully into the programme.

Annie Mitchell
David Packwood